

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

Memorandum

JAN 29 1980

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TO : Heads of Divisions and Offices

FROM : Comptroller General

James B. Peltz

SUBJECT: Requests for Intelligence Information

Because of the importance of protecting intelligence sources and methods from unauthorized disclosure, the responsibility for which is codified in the National Security Act of 1947, as amended (50 U.S.C. §§401-412) and Executive Order No. 12035, January 24, 1978, GAO must exercise particular care in planning, conducting, and reporting on work involving intelligence activity and intelligence product of the Government.

As a general rule, GAO will seek access to information concerning intelligence activity only when access is needed (1) to enable us to be responsive to a specific request of the chairman of a committee or (2) when, in accordance with explicit understanding between GAO and an agency, access is needed to adequately evaluate the effectiveness, efficiency and economy of certain operations. In these cases, GAO may also seek access to intelligence product.

On all other assignments, GAO, as a general rule, will seek access only to intelligence product. GAO does not seek access to intelligence product to evaluate its accuracy, adequacy or quality. Without access to this information, however, our reports could be incomplete, erroneous, and possibly misleading. Having access does not necessarily mean we will include highly sensitive intelligence information in our reports, but we will at least have the benefit of knowing the full story in deciding what our opinion should be and what we should, and should not, report. In any case in which a determination is made that it would be useful to include or reference sensitive intelligence information in a report, the GAO staff and the agency staff will reach agreement on the use of such information in the report. In the event such agreement cannot be reached, the matter will be brought to the attention of the Comptroller General for appropriate discussion with the agency head.

In handling intelligence information, GAO will strictly adhere to the security standards of the agency from which it was obtained. In all cases, the agency will be asked to indicate the appropriate security classification of the information provided. In the case of special compartmented intelligence information, we will not remove the material from the agency involved without the express approval of the agency.

Requests for clearance of GAO staff for access to special compartmented intelligence information will be made only after approval by the Comptroller General or the Deputy Comptroller General. Requests for access to special compartmented intelligence information by those holding clearances will be approved by the cognizant division director on an assignment-by-assignment basis. Where there may be special sensitivity regarding new assignments which may involve compartmented intelligence information, the division director will advise the Comptroller General before approving the assignment.

In order to maintain proper liaison with the intelligence agencies, the following persons are designated for liaison purposes:

Martin J. Fitzgerald, OCR	-- Senate and House Intelligence Committees
Frank C. Conahan, ID	-- CIA
Jerome H. Stolarow, PSAD	-- DIA
Donald J. Horan, LCD	-- NSA

Requests for clearance of GAO staff for access to special compartmented intelligence information, after approval by the Comptroller General or the Deputy Comptroller General, will be made to the Central Intelligence Agency by the designated GAO liaison official for that agency. All other contacts with the agencies should be made through the designated liaison officials.

I have assured the Director of Central Intelligence that the above procedures will be followed closely.